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ABSTRACT

The traditional goals of teacher education programs in Canada are preparing teachers who can work within existing school systems, who are knowledgeable in subject areas, and who have skills in various teaching techniques. These goals are at variance with the recognized need on the part of the schools for teachers who can integrate theory and practice, who have the ability to analyze critically, and who have perceptions and skills to implement changes. To enrich the practicum period to the mutual advantage of both students and cooperating teachers, Canadian teacher education programs should develop practicums that: (1) develop a closer philosophic match between school and university; (2) develop a clear understanding of the impact of intervention in the school by the university supervisor; (3) provide opportunity for mutual involvement in planning of practicums; (4) use the practicum as a school-focused form of professional development for cooperating teachers; and (5) utilize the practicum as the core component in the teacher education process. (JD)

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THE ROLE OF THE PRACTICUM IN BRIDGING THE GAP
BETWEEN SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

The decade we have just experienced witnessed radical changes in the process of teacher education in western Canada. The major focus of these changes was on the pre-service training of teachers, in particular the introduction of the extended practicum. What this meant in practice was that student teachers spent far more time learning their craft in the schools than in the lecture hall or seminar room. This move was widely applauded by the public (who in some provinces had a major input into the innovation) as well as the main constituents in the teacher education process. Although no major evaluation of this change has taken place, there is the distinct impression that, 1) the innovation has not had as great an impact on developing a cooperative partnership between schools and universities as had been expected, and 2) that there are areas of potential in the practicum model which have not been fully explored or developed.

This impression, on which the argument that follows is based, is not simply intuitive, but predicated on a continuing program of research initiated some three years ago.¹ However in this paper we do not wish to dwell on these negative aspects of the practicum, but to explore the potentialities of this important and fundamental aspect of teacher education. To this end the paper first reviews some of the major issues in contemporary Canadian teacher education vis-a-vis the practicum (which have emerged from our research) and with this as background suggests some guidelines for enhancing the praxis of practicum in western Canada.

1. Vide; Wideen and Hopkins 1978, Hopkins 1979a and 1979b, Wideen et al, 1979, Wideen, forthcoming, Wideen and Hopkins, forthcoming.

Some Contemporary Issues in Canadian Teacher Education

This section articulates some of the contemporary issues in Canadian teacher education, which have a bearing on the practicum. Its purpose is to set a background against which the potentialities and problems of the practicum can be assessed. In the main the data for these assertions have been gathered during a two-year nation-wide study of Canadian teacher education, which is soon to report.²

1. The Practicum. One of the concerns of our research has been to ascertain what program changes have occurred in western Canadian faculties of education during the past six years. The overwhelming response to these enquiries has pointed to the introduction of the extended practicum. Every faculty in our western sample³ now provides a sustained period of internship in a school for every trainee teacher. Characteristically, during this period they work alongside a carefully selected practising teacher and are supervised by a master teacher or clinical professor, who may or may not hold a tenure track position on the university faculty. The key actors in this process, viz, the student, the supervising teacher and the clinical professor interact in a carefully structured and empathic way so as to (at least in theory) maximize the learning potential of this unique collaborative and caring situation. The model of interaction commonly used is the "clinical supervision model"⁴ which places emphasis on a mutual setting of growth objectives for the trainee teacher, the execution of which are carefully monitored during their teaching practice. The objective data so gathered is later discussed in a feedback session where the strengths

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2. This is the S.S. & H.R.C. funded project "Change in Teacher Education in Anglophone Canada", principal investigators, Dr. M.F. Wideen, S.F.U. & Dr. Michael Fullan, OISE; due to report Summer 1980.
 3. University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina.
 4. See in particular Cogan, 1973, and Goldhammer, 1969.

and weaknesses of the performance are mutually assessed and remedial action if necessary is suggested within an open and non-threatening climate.

This generic model forms the theoretical basis of most extended practica.

There are obvious advantages to this approach; the students learn from expert practitioners within the workplace, are actively encouraged to integrate theory and practice, and from the start of their training are immersed in the practical realities of schooling. However, there are also some evident practical problems with the method which seriously affect implementation. The model is very demanding in terms of resources, both human and financial, and the consequent pressure placed on clinical professors often means that the pre and post conference components (an integral part of the process) are neglected in practice. This inevitably affects the effectiveness of the method.

2. The Pervasiveness of the Traditional Goals of Teacher Education.

Preliminary results from our teacher education survey suggest that what we have called "the traditional goals of teacher education" are currently assigned the most importance in Canadian faculties of education. The three goals which are consistently ranked the highest in our preliminary results are:

- i. Preparing teachers who can adapt to and work within existing school systems;
- ii. To prepare teachers who are knowledgeable in subject or content areas;
- iii. To prepare teachers who have skills in various teaching techniques.

These goals have traditionally provided the *raison d'etre* for teacher education, and it is not surprising that faculty still perceive them to be the most important. It may also be, that given the stress and pressure associated with day-to-day work in a faculty and the evident amount of faculty pluralism, the traditional goals are the survivors simply because they have existed for so long. It is perhaps inevitable that in the face of controversy, dissension and the threat of change, faculty tend to fall back on them.

It is also interesting to note that the importance of the "traditional" goals are complemented by a predilection for traditional and didactic instructional practice on the part of faculty. Preliminary results from our survey demonstrate that the two most favoured forms of instructional practice are:

- i. Listening to lectures or watching demonstrations;
- ii. Receiving instruction through audio-visual, printed or other self-teaching material;

These two data would seem to suggest an image of Canadian teacher education which is conservative both in content and practice, and which has not yet fully appreciated the potential of the most important change in which it has been involved during the last decade.

3. Where is the Reflexive and Adaptable Teacher? This rather harsh contention is supported by further data which points to a lack of emphasis by Canadian teacher educators on preparing teachers who are critical, adaptive and flexible. The three goals of teacher education which ranked lowest in our survey were:

- i. Preparing teachers who can integrate theory and practice;

- ii. Preparing teachers who have the ability to analyze critically the existing school system;
- iii. Preparing teachers who have the perceptions and skills to implement changes in the schools.

Faced with a declining teacher population, an exponential increase in the knowledge base, and a society which is in the midst of a period of rapid, pervasive and fundamental change; these results give cause for some concern.

Yet our data points to a further compounding factor. In response to questions such as, "What are the most important problems facing Canadian teacher education today?", the response is characteristically:

"the need to integrate theory and practice"

"to produce teachers with well-developed critical capacities"

"to improve contact with the field", and so on.

So although we are as yet not producing teachers of this ilk, there is at least the realization that they are needed. Perhaps it is the function of the extended practicum to fully exploit this paradox.

4. The Ends/Means Dichotomy in Provincial Curriculum Development. The need to produce teachers with the kind of qualities alluded to above is further highlighted when one considers the tasks which they have to perform. Assuming that we do produce teachers who can survive in existing school situations and who do know how to teach, this does not ensure that they can meet the practical realities imposed on them by external agencies - in this instance the provincial Ministry of Education. The imposition of centrally derived curricula is a characteristic of Canadian education. Curriculum development is legally

the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, although there are many stakeholders associated with this enterprise. What this means in practice (certainly in British Columbia, see Oberg 1979) is that the Ministry produces curriculum guidelines which then have to be fleshed out and implemented by practising teachers. The Ministry provides the performance objectives, the ends, and leaves the decisions about means, the how of the curriculum, to the local level. This approach to curriculum development has a number of implications reaching far beyond the scope of this paper, but what it means for the beginning teacher is a responsibility and expectation for implementation that extends beyond their trained competence. If our teachers are expected to have this capability (and it is not an unreasonable expectation), then we have a responsibility to develop this capacity within them. Unfortunately in the light of data we are receiving, this as yet is not the case.

5. The Enigma of Professional Development. If the argument made in the last section (i.e. that we expect teachers to accomplish tasks for which they are not trained), is true for beginning teachers, then it is even more the case with mid-career teachers.

Recently a number of factors have combined to argue forcefully for a reevaluation of our present approach to the in-service or professional development of teachers. We have discussed these reasons at length elsewhere,⁵ but the coincidence of three factors principally account for the current emphasis on in-service. These are i. the failure of the curriculum reform movement, which has highlighted the primary importance of the teacher in the work place; ii. the period of societal change that

5. Hopkins 1979c, and Wideen, Hopkins and Pye, 1980.

we find ourselves in, and iii. recent changes in the demographic balance of the western world which has resulted in declining school enrollments and a contraction in the teaching population.

This reevaluation has pointed to serious deficiencies in our in-service provision, as Fullan (1979) noted in his paper on School Focussed In-service in Canada;

There are few things in education which offer so much promise and are so frustratingly wasteful as the multitude of in-service activities and proposals across this country and elsewhere.

The widespread use of one shot workshops, the lack of follow up, and the arbitrary selection of in-service topics are all indicators of a system of professional development which has failed and is failing to enhance the professional skills of our teachers.

What this means for the practicum is all too obvious. The clinical supervision model on which most extended practica are based requires input from cooperating teachers. If they are not engaged in a continual process of professional development, then the quality of the product of the interaction is bound to suffer. This is not to imply that there is no professional development amongst cooperating teachers (indeed they are more likely to be professionally autonomous than most), but to highlight a system deficiency which has serious implications for the effective implementation of practicum.

6. Relationship Between School and University. In a case study of the York Teacher Education program (Wideen and Hopkins 1978), we noted the existence of what we called two cultures; the culture of the school and the culture of the university:

An interesting feature of the case is the strikingly different perspectives from which the results emerge. From the interviews it became evident that there were differing perceptions held by the university on the one hand, and by the school on the other, of each other's role. To stereotype, the school perceived the university as being out of touch with the reality of public education, hide-bound by intellectual theorizing and blissfully oblivious to the practical difficulties of classroom teaching. In the same way, the school was seen as having the monopoly of common knowledge when it comes to classroom practice and the initiation of student teachers into this folklore. It is this differing perception of modes that we will call the two cultures.

We have noted this dichotomy elsewhere in our work in teacher education, and it appears to us to militate against successful collaboration between two of the most important constituents in the educative process. Antoinette Oberg (1979) in the paper cited above, noticed a similar tendency when she said that,

Academics are seldom regular members of a district curriculum committee. The opinion is that they tend to dominate the proceedings, that they are too theoretical and out of touch with the realities of the classroom, and that teachers will often reject an academically advised curriculum because they do not feel it to be their own.

The question of ownership is a vitally important one, for without it little successful implementation will take place. Unless both school and university can be centrally involved in instituting, developing and implementing on a shared and equal basis then little of profit will occur through collaboration, and enormous potential and possibilities will have been wasted.

This selective and rather arbitrary discussion of current issues in contemporary Canadian teacher education, has served to highlight some of the shortcomings and potentialities of the practicum as we see it today.

The practicum is a major innovation in Canadian teacher education which has not been supported by a complementary change in style or goals. The form may have changed, but the content has remained the same, and unless form and content are combined within a dialectic, then effective and purposeful change will not occur. The failure so far of this innovation to radically affect Canadian teacher education, is particularly distressing as both beginning and continuing teachers are faced with changing conditions to which they need to respond. Our research suggests that at the present time neither group is in general receiving the training which will allow them to do this. As a result the traditional gap between school and university remains as large as it always has been.

Our argument is that the practicum is an effective tool for reducing some of the problems we have just articulated. It could be the means whereby faculties adjust their goals; it could provide both beginning and continuing teachers with an opportunity for professional development; and as a result, it could draw the schools and universities into a closer relationship for the benefit of the educative process of the whole.

Guidelines for the Successful Implementation of Extended Practicum

The preceding section has sketched some of the contemporary background to Canadian teacher education, and in so doing has illuminated some of the sources of weakness and potential in the implementation of practica. This analysis has demonstrated that, to use a sociological term, the practicum as an innovation has not been fully institutionalized. To maintain that an innovation, in this instance the practicum, has been institutionalized or implemented implies that each of four components have

been put into practice (see Fullan 1975). These dimensions are 1) structure 2) Role/Behaviour 3) knowledge and understanding and 4) value internalization. Thus to say that the practicum has been implemented implies: that new structural or organizational features are in place; that the actual behaviour, not only the roles, of those involved in the practicum has changed; that everyone fully understands the assumptions, purposes and methods of the practicum; and finally that all of those involved appreciate the worthwhileness and desirability of the practicum.

Unfortunately this is in many instances only too patently not the case. Keeping these dimensions of implementation in mind and based on the preceding discussion we now present five guidelines for the successful implementation of the extended practicum. If followed we suggest that they would significantly enhance the current practice of the extended practicum, and result in a closer cooperation and collaboration between school and university.

1. Closer Philosophic Match between School and University. The extract from the York study quoted above suggested the existence of two cultures which impeded school-university relations. The data from that case study suggested that implementation of the practicum is significantly enhanced by the existence of philosophic compatibility between the goals of both institutions. But this is not to neglect the climate of the interaction. Just as in the microcosm of the clinical supervision meetings, an open, warm and frank climate, and a clear perception and appraisal of objectives are highly prized, so should this on the larger scale, be the dominant characteristic guiding school-university interaction.

It appears that both goal compatibility and climate are both import-

ant, but that given the latter the former often occurs as an inevitable result of an ongoing relationship. Simply being involved in a cooperative relationship draws the cultures of the school and the university together. The reasons for this are not altogether clear. The York case study suggested that the mere presence of a student teacher in the classroom prompted an increase in professional self-examination on the part of the cooperating teacher. Effective self examination requires criteria for self-assessment. Many schools lack a programmatic stance, so the teacher may turn to the nearest philosophic signpost for direction, and that commonality is the university. It is in this way that the two cultures can be drawn closer together. But as was mentioned earlier this is predicated in the first place on a warm climate of interaction between the school and university.

2. A Clearer Perception of the Dynamics of Intervention. Every time the university intervenes in a school, it disturbs the status quo. This statement is made without inferring any value judgments, just a simple acknowledgement of the fact. Current perspectives on change suggest that this intervention has two major effects -- a) on the system and b) on the individual.

a) The last fifteen years have given us clear notice of the limitations of the "top-down" or "centre-periphery" approaches to educational change. Like the "one-off" in-service workshops, sporadic university involvement in the life of the school for practicum purposes is likely to have little, no,

or even a negative effect. Given this the university should be careful to establish an ongoing relationship with the school, using the open climate mentioned above as a fertilizer. This climate effectively prepares the soil for intervention and innovation, but we must also be aware of two interrelated effects which appear from the literature to be necessary for successful implementation. They are mutual adaptation and ownership.

Mutual adaptation refers to the process that occurs to an innovation when it has been successfully institutionalized. It tends to adapt to fit local conditions, and in so doing alters the erstwhile practice of the receiving institution. In terms of the practicum, it would tend to assume a different character within each of the schools it was successfully operating. As a corollary to this a sense of ownership would develop on the part of the school towards the practicum and thus stamp the intervention with the uniqueness of its environment. Universities must be aware of this process and be fully prepared to encourage the receiving school to adapt the practicum to its own needs and situation.

b) The clinical supervision model is predicated on the cooperation of a host or cooperating teacher who in a real way guides the student through the practicum. The university must be aware of the impact this has upon that individual. This could involve a lack of privacy, the possibility of threat, and in most cases much extra expenditure of time. This behoves the clinical professor to be cognizant of the impact of the intervention on the host teacher, and to be sensitive to the strains which such an intervention may cause. To be fully implemented, the constituent actors must alter roles and adjust behavior to meet the clinical requirements; fully understand the nature of the process; and value the practicum

as being worthwhile. For some teachers this may involve a complete paradigm shift. This is obviously not a simple process and requires much sensitivity on the part of the university. Unfortunately, we have evidence of cooperating teachers who had little idea of what was involved or going on in the practicum. Needless to say the innovation was not very successful in those schools.

3. Mutual Involvement in Planning and Process of Practicum. So far it has been suggested that the relationship between the school and university should be philosophically compatible and be aware of the dynamics of intervention. In this guideline we suggest that it should take the form of a partnership. We learned from the York study that the more the school was involved in the planning of the practicum the more productive would be their involvement.

Structural change is as we have seen one of the dimensions associated with institutionalization, and it is important that when considering the practicum both school and university exhibit organizational features associated with accommodating student teachers. We will discuss what this could mean for the university in #5 below; here the concern is more with the school. There has usually been little change in the schools' organization as a result of participating in the practicum. The University has done all the planning and preparation and then presents the student to the school. The argument here is that the school should be more centrally involved in this process.

It is difficult to prescribe exactly what this should entail. An obvious ideal example, is that of the practicum school, which has a close and ongoing relationship with the university, has a constant supply of student

teachers who are integrated into the curriculum, and who make decisions equally with the university on policy associated with the practicum.

This model has many obvious advantages but at the present time is unlikely to be widely employed. However there appear to be a couple of structural components which can contribute to this direction: communication and key roles. It should hardly need to be said that clear and effective communication channels should be established between school and university. Unfortunately communication is often done on an ad hoc basis. A school committee, regular contact and efficient information flow, would certainly assist the school in taking more control over this part of their life. In addition it is vitally important that individuals in key roles are involved in this process. For example, on the school side, the principal and the staff member responsible for professional development should be included.

4. The Practicum as School Focused In-Service. One of the most potent yet neglected forms of in-service, is the model which relates teacher learning to teacher practice within the work place. Recently, Michael Fullan's (1979) important paper, "School Focused In-Service in Canada" highlighted the dearth of programs of this type in Canada. Interestingly enough the practicum offers a beguiling opportunity for this type of professional development.

The three main actors in the clinical supervision model are the student, teacher and professor. In terms of present practice they are engaged in a lopsided learning experience. Only the student is supposed to learn! Obviously this is rarely the case, and usually the host teacher

and the clinical professor find the process professionally stimulating. But, it would not take much ingenuity or structural change, to address the major components of the supervision process - the conferences, observation, analysis and training--to teacher as well as student needs. Then the process becomes one which is mutually profitable.

We have noticed in the York study the simple fact of having a student in their class encourages teachers to professional self examination. If this tendency could be extended and formalized then we have the basis for an in-service program that could benefit both the student, the cooperating teacher and the school. Given an assessment of teacher in-service needs and a flexible approach to course enrollment by the university, there is little impediment to course credit being awarded to host teachers who develop their own competence whilst tutoring student teachers, and being supervised by a clinical professor.

A further extension of this idea would be to involve the clinical professor more in the life of the school. This would at least help them to integrate theory and practice in a more realistic way, and allow them to give more guidance to cooperating teachers particularly along the lines mentioned above. Perhaps a cross appointment between school and university is a possibility, at least it has a precedent in Madeline Hunter. This is not to advocate that all professors work in schools, just to admit that perhaps this popular notion has some credibility after all!

5. Implications for Teacher Education. So far we have discussed the role of the practicum in improving school-university relations, and as a potential model for in-service. Finally we wish to briefly explore its utility as a vehicle for reform of teacher education. We argued earlier that there is a pressing need for teachers who were adaptable,

creative and critical, yet it is not these qualities that our present system of teacher education develops. This is despite an awareness on the part of teacher educators of the importance of such qualities.

One way of doing this would be to utilize the practicum as the core component in the teacher education process, using it to integrate and focus the students' induction into the discipline of education. The suggestion is that the practicum become the focus of the students' subsequent educational study, that it is the laboratory where the theories of education essential to the development of teachers can be tested. Up to the present, the universal introduction of the extended practicum has had little practical impact on the traditional course offerings in faculties of education. They still exist alongside the practicum, secure in the boundaries imposed by their discipline, oblivious to the seething and challenging educational hiatus outside.

This is an excellent example of the failure to institutionalize a change. Although the structural changes may have been made, e.g. in timetabling and course content, and professors who understood the process had been assigned new roles, the innovation was not completely implemented. Changes in roles do not ensure changes in behavior, nor structural change ensure commitment. It is those two aspects of implementation which appear the most difficult to achieve.

The implications of this suggestion are pervasive, and run directly against the traditional ethos and organizational variables of faculties of education. Despite this and admitting the difficulties involved we feel secure in claiming that unless this type of approach is taken we will

continue to sag under the weight of our unique professional albatross - the integration of theory and practice - and continue to produce teachers competent only in anachronisms.

This paper has attempted to set the problems and potential of the practicum against an analysis of contemporary Canadian teacher education. This last section has outlined some ways in which these problems can be faced and the potential exploited. We have concentrated mainly on the role of the university and have been delinquent in underplaying the school's contribution to all this, but that is another paper for a different audience.

In conclusion, the five "guidelines" articulated above (viz., a closer philosophic match, a sensitivity to the dynamics of intervention, more school involvement in planning and process, the opportunities for in-service, and the implications for teacher education), suggest a method whereby the school and university can enter into an increasingly productive, and ongoing partnership. This would result in enhanced professional growth for both student and teacher, as well as providing a vehicle for the radical reform of teacher education. And that's not such a bad idea after all.

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